

# Vicksburg National Military Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Vicksburg National Military Park



## Beulah Cemetery



As Vicksburg's only cemetery for African-Americans, Beulah Cemetery is located on Old Jackson Road, adjoining the eastern boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park. The cemetery was established in 1884 by Tabernacle No. 19 Independent Order of Brothers and Sisters of Love and Charity, a fraternal order that had wide support among Blacks. The 53-acre, lightly rolling tract was purchased for \$1000 from Harvey and Lucy Shannon and named for the proverbial Beulah Land of Biblical origin.

### One More River to Cross



Beulah Cemetery has been continuously used since its founding in 1884 and is significant as one of the most intact historic properties associated with the growth and development of the African-American community of Vicksburg. From its establishment until the mid-1940s, Beulah was the most important cemetery for burials in the city's Black community.

There are more than 5,500 graves scattered across the grassy, tree-studded cemetery, the majority dating from 1884 to the 1940s. The cemetery did not develop in an "orderly" fashion, and does not appear to have been formally landscaped. Many of the graves are clustered by families, with family plots in some instances delineated by masonry copings and fences. The graves are oriented in an east-west direction with grave markers facing east and varying widely - from simple, crude, hand-made markers to elaborately carved obelisks. A low, chain-link fence to enclose the property and a metal arch at the main entrance (since removed) were added in the 1950s.

The cemetery contains gravesites for ancestors of almost every African-American native of Vicksburg, and is the final resting place for members of some of the most prominent Black families in Vicksburg's history. Although burials have decreased significantly since 1945, due to the increased popularity,

accessibility and availability of Cedar Hill (City) Cemetery, Beulah Cemetery is still used as a place of interment.

The African-American community has constituted a significant proportion of Vicksburg's population from the city's founding in 1812, making up nearly one-half of the population. Despite this long history, there are few early historic African-American resources that survive, or that retain sufficient integrity to be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Many of these resources have been lost through demolition or have been so severely neglected that they have suffered major losses of integrity. The rarity of properties associated with the African-American community, therefore, increases the relative significance of Beulah Cemetery, which remains an intact and highly visible landmark for the Black community, and provides information, through its tombstones, about the history of African-Americans in Vicksburg. This ethnic group's customs, such as the arrangement, clustering and other means of identifying families and persons of importance, are also preserved in this cemetery. The cemetery documents the existence of generations of people who otherwise would have no surviving physical memorial.

